



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE February 11, 2010

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Senate Bill 51 - An Act Concerning Machine-Readable Medical Benefits Identification Cards

The Department of Public Health opposes Senate Bill 51 as it does not currently fall within the purview of the Department and would have a significant fiscal impact.

Senate Bill 51 requires the Department of Public Health (the Department), in consultation with the Health Information and Exchange Advisory Committee, to adopt regulations to establish the electronic data and other technological standards for scanning devices to access or read medical benefits information contained on medical benefits identification cards issued by insurers, health care centers, hospital service corporations, medical service corporations or other entities. The Bill also requires the Department to approve such scanning devices in accordance with these regulations.

Public Act 09-232, "An Act Concerning Revisions to Department of Public Health Licensing Statutes" (the Act), designated the Department as the lead health information exchange organization for the State. Passage of the Act tasked the Department with the implementation and periodic revisions of a Health Information Technology Plan, including the implementation of an integrated state-wide electronic health information infrastructure for the sharing of electronic health information among health care facilities, health care professionals, public and private payers and patients. The Act also required the Department to develop standards and protocols for privacy in the sharing of electronic health information.

The Act also mandated the establishment of a Health Information Technology and Exchange (HITE) Advisory Committee by October 1, 2009, and required the Advisory Committee to convene the first meeting by November 1, 2009. In accordance with Section 76 (i) of the Act, the Commissioner of Public Health and the HITE Advisory Committee shall report to the Governor and the General Assembly on (1) any private or federal funds received during the preceding quarter and, if applicable, how such funds were expended, (2) the amount of grants-in-aid awarded to eligible institutions, (3) the recipients of such grants-in-aid, and (4) the current status of health information exchange and health information technology in the state, not later than February 1, 2010 and annually thereafter until February 1, 2015.

The Department and the Advisory Committee are focused on developing the capacity for the statewide exchange and meaningful use of health information. The establishment of electronic and other technological standards for scanning devices as defined in Senate Bill 51 does not fall within the purview of the Advisory Committee. Additionally, The Department would need to hire personnel with expertise in commercial scanning devices and review the operation of the equipment on a regular basis to ensure the determined privacy standards and security protocols are maintained. As such, Senate Bill 51 will have a significant fiscal impact on the Department.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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